

GET ON UP

By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



Get on Up is the latest Hollywood biopic that offers an intimate portrait of the legendary James Brown. A fast-paced mixture of past and present, *Get on Up* is soulful and poignant with a great performance by Chadwick Boseman as James Brown. *Get on Up* can also boast a terrific supporting cast that includes Nelsan Ellis (*True Blood*) as Bobby Byrd, Brown's loyal and long-suffering friend. This is not a romanticized tribute to the man nor is it a let's-bring-out-all-the-skeletons-in-the-closet exposé. It is an honest and respectful portrayal of one man's struggle to overcome a rough childhood and the price he paid to achieve fame and fortune.

If you have ever heard James Brown sing, you know what he was all about. He was the best at what he did. His focused, raw energy, his command of an audience and the way only he could deliver a song like "Please". Well, if you aren't familiar with his work, you can always look it up online. For those of us who remember all of those beats and those moves, *Get on Up* is a nostalgic return to the times when you could say it loud. James Brown said it loud and the people listened and loved him as much because of his offstage flaws in spite of them.

James Brown had his share of misfortune along the way, but *Get on Up* is about resilience and the sort of resolve that replaces defeat. Was he a loyal friend, a good husband or a good father? Ask his friends, his wives and his children. Was he a great performer who made a difference in the world of music? Absolutely. As with all film biographies, there is always some fiction (for entertainment or dramatic purposes) mixed in with the truth. But just what is the truth about any music performer's life? Is it what you do at home or onstage? Where did the real James Brown live? Everywhere he went, he brought the same intensity, passion and precision.

James Brown took on the music industry at a time when people paid for the privilege to get played on the radio. His synthesis of music and business paved the way for so many others who followed his example. He set the stage for live recordings with his Apollo performance. I had the pleasure of seeing him perform live. The splits, the sequined cape and the "hardest working man in show business" title remain his trademarks. His influence can be seen in so many others since he first came on the

scene. The “Godfather of Soul” was one of a kind. He should never be overlooked or forgotten. At Oscar time, neither should *Get on Up*.

I give *Get on Up* five hit records.

